

Delaware Forest Service announces new turkey permit for state forests



Redden State Forest in Georgetown is one of the three state forests where hunters can apply for a turkey permit for the 2019 spring season.

DOVER – For the first time, the Delaware Forest Service (DFS) will issue turkey hunting permits through a separate lottery for the 2019 spring season. Previously, statewide permits were available only through DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife. The 2019 Delaware [turkey hunting season](#) runs for four consecutive weeks from Saturday, April 13 to Saturday, May 11, with a special youth and non-ambulatory disabled hunter day scheduled for Saturday, April 6. State forest turkey permits will be issued for one of four season segments: A (4/13-4/19), B (4/20-4/26), C (4/27-5/3), or D (5/4-5/11).

The new Delaware State Forest [Turkey Hunting Permit Application](#) is now available [online](#).

Turkey hunters will be able to request a permit for Blackbird State Forest, Taber State Forest, and Redden State Forest. Hunters may also indicate their request for preferred weeks and locations. The change will now provide hunters with up to two weeks of permitted turkey hunting: either at a DNREC Wildlife Area or a Delaware State Forest. State forest hunting is still free to the public and requires no separate usage fees. The DFS receives no funding from income generated by hunting license and registration fees. Despite the change, all previous turkey hunting license and registration requirements will remain in effect: harvested wild turkeys must still be registered through the state turkey hunting check stations. Hunters are also required to complete a turkey hunting safety education course.

“The Delaware Forest Service’s goal is to enhance the quality of turkey hunting opportunities on state forest lands. We currently do not have access to site-specific data on turkey populations and harvests that can help us better manage this important natural resource. By issuing our own permits, we can gather more information about each forest tract and gain feedback from hunters on actual ground conditions so we can improve their overall experience,” said Kyle Hoyd, assistant state forester.

“We are also exploring ways to implement forest management techniques, such as small selected clear-cuts, that can foster better turkey habitat.”

In addition, the DFS will use a system that allows hunters to call in if they no longer need their permit so it can be reassigned to another individual on the waiting list. This was developed in response to a lack of hunters during the 2017 and 2018 seasons. The DFS will also provide hunters with a survey card they will need to fill out to apply the following year that includes questions on how many turkeys they saw, days hunted, what tracts they hunted, etc.

"We want to base our turkey management strategy on information we receive from both our professional forestry staff as well as the general public. By incorporating field surveys of turkey populations, habitat, and ground conditions at state forests, we hope to ensure the health of our wild turkey population long into the future" said Hoyd.